



## **Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee**

### **Minutes**

Date: April 21st, 2021

Time: 7:15PM

Location: Via Zoom conference

**Attendees:**

*Executive committee:* Christopher Tonkin (chair), Doug Greenfield, Jack Johnson, Muris Kobaslija, Adam MacNeill (treasurer), Doug Mayo-Wells (secretary), Scott Smith (TAC liaison)

*Town of Arlington:* Daniel Amstutz (Sr Transportation Planner), Officer Robert Smith (APD, COBWEB)

*Members of the public:* Linda Epstein (Mass Ave/Appleton Design Review Committee), Roderick Holland (Town Meeting, Pct 7), Stephan Miller, Petru Sofio

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### **1. Introductions, Ground rules**

Christopher Tonkin read a set of prepared remarks explaining the procedures that the Committee would use to hold a virtual meeting, in accordance with Governor Baker's executive order of March 12th, 2020.

See:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/order-suspending-certain-provision-of-open-meeting-law/download>

Tonkin notified attendees that Committee secretary Doug Mayo-Wells is taking minutes; the meeting is being recorded for the purposes of verifying the minutes; and the recording will be deleted after the minutes are approved. Tonkin confirmed the committee members in attendance for the meeting.

## 2. Approval of minutes from previous meeting (December 2020, March 2021)

Mayo-Wells and Muris Kobaslija noted typos in March and December minutes. Mayo-Wells reviewed outstanding questions on December minutes. Roderick Holland clarified that north/south trail reference in the minutes was to the Bruce Freeman trail.

Scott Smith: Moved to Approve minutes for December and March as amended

Mayo-Wells: Seconded

SO VOTED (7-0)

## 3. Report from COBWEB Officer (Cops on Bicycles with Education for Bicyclists)

Tonkin advised that he Received email from Capt. Flynn re: crash data from Arlington Center. Officer Smith said he had nothing of note to report, but was happy to take questions. Jack Johnson asked if there is an update on the new Lake Street signal. Officer Smith said it was going well so far, people are obeying the signal. Petru Sofio noted that vehicles are frequently stopped in bike lane between Mystic St, Swan Pl. He asked if APD has observed problems with vehicles stopped in bike lane here or elsewhere in Town? Officer Smith said that he was unsure of the number of complaints but advised to call when this happens to get it addressed. Adam MacNeill asked if there was anything to report since the curfew was lifted on the Minuteman Bikeway. Officer Smith said he was not aware of any issues but that Capt. Flynn could possibly have more data.

## 4. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) Report

Bikeway pavement concerns

Scott Smith said that Town Engineer Wayne Chouinard has noticed root damage near the high school, and requests help from ABAC with identifying/reporting pavement damage; it's easier to deal with if identified early. Tonkin noted that there is also root damage near the Bike Stop. Holland noted that the Department of Public Works (DPW) is quite responsive to issues filed through the Request/Answer center on the Town website.

*Action: Smith volunteers to evaluate the Eastern segment of the Bikeway, e.g., between Linwood/Lake St. Tonkin volunteers to evaluate Western segment.*

Smith advised to use the Request/Answer center to report issues, but mention Town Engineer Chouinard in the report. Doug Greenfield noted that there is a dangerously

steep dropoff on the edge of the bikeway pavement between the Kickstand Cafe and Linwood st, he asks if this has been discussed before. Tonkin said it has, but not recently, may even have been resurfaced since. It would be good to report that as well. This could be a problem especially for a trailer or wide stroller. Kobaslija noted that on the bridge over Alewife Brook, one rotted plank was recently replaced. He asked if they could all be replaced. Tonkin noted that communication from Cambridge was received about this, even though the bridge is in the Town there have been some concerns about jurisdiction. This concern was raised to DPW about 5 years ago and not prioritized at that time, but the bridge has continued to deteriorate.

*Action: Tonkin will open correspondence with DPW to identify long-term fix of the bridge*

Chestnut St design, bike accommodation included in proposals

Smith mentions that a public information session was held (and also discussed at TAC) re: Chestnut St, where there was a pedestrian fatality in December 2019. He reported good progress; looking at bike lanes, bumpouts for the crosswalk. Sofio suggested a parking-protected bike lane although parking by St. Agnes on the eastbound side may be a concern.

Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

Smith informed the Committee that the MUTCD is currently up for public comment. Many comments have been submitted. Regarding confusion over use of solid green circle when there are directional restrictions, current MUTCD guidance is somewhat contradictory:

- Section 4A.03: Vehicular traffic facing a CIRCULAR GREEN signal indication is permitted to proceed straight through or turn right or left or make a U-turn movement except as such movement is modified by lane-use signs, turn prohibition signs, lane markings, roadway design, separate turn signal indications, or other traffic control devices.
- Section 4F.01 Application of Steady and Flashing Signal Indications during Steady: A steady CIRCULAR GREEN signal indication shall be displayed only when it is intended to permit traffic to proceed in any direction that is lawful and practical.

Petru Sofio mentioned that has submitted a comment on the MUTCD. Smith recommended making comments as specific as possible, there will be thousands of comments, a few hundred may be unique.

## Other TAC Items

Daniel Amstutz noted that TAC chair Howard Muise will be retiring and moving out of Arlington to be closer to family.

## 5. Mass Ave/Mystic Intersection

Tonkin has received communication from APD Capt. Flynn. The crime analyst who provides statistics has been out of the office, but provided guidance. Capt Flynn searched the past 5 years for incidents categorized with injury, without injury, and pedestrian crashes. The search should also include bicycle incidents. He found very few in general. There were also some crashes with little-to-no damage/no injuries, where officer facilitated exchange of insurance information. The search may not be comprehensive, but it is clear that crashes increase farther away from the signal, e.g, at Pleasant St/Swan St, Pleasant St & Wellington St, Mystic St & Winslow St, Mystic at Municipal parking lot – all areas with limited or no traffic control system. Capt Flynn can research specific incidents if requested, and have the crime analyst verify these results on her return. Tonkin noted that some incidents may not be reported, and near-misses aren't included in statistics.

S. Smith points out that if MUTCD guidance on circular green is confusing, it is expected that motorists are confused. Smith has not found many crashes (from illegal right turn on red with green circle signal) but many violations.

Sofio observed that he has seen many illegal turns on red at Mass Ave & Mystic, nearly one per cycle, including a disturbing near-miss between a bicycle and a semi tractor-trailer (with no protective skirt) turning from the center lane. He has observed at least one illegal right turn from Mass Ave onto Mystic after the installation of the louvers on the signals. Prohibited right turns when through traffic has green is not a standard practice, so it needs to be super-clear for motorists.

Sofio also noted that the bike box is crowding virtually every cycle, especially on weekends, concern has been expressed on social media. Sofio suggested a lead bike interval if enlarging the bike box is not possible, at least during morning rush hour or on Saturday, so bikes have an opportunity to get out of the way of motor vehicle traffic. Sofio has taken video and still pictures of crowding.

Tonkin suggested that sharing images and video with DPW may be helpful to establish the need to take action. Tonkin noted that signal timing issues may make it difficult to introduce a lead time for bike box.

MacNeil asked if the crash data is mappable?

Amstutz said that all crashes over the last 10 years, and all fatalities over the last 20, have already been mapped as part of the Connect Arlington plan. MassDOT also has a searchable Impact Database (<https://apps.impact.dot.state.ma.us/cdp/home>). Takes some work to learn what query returns the data you need, and data from the last 2 years may not be finalized.

Mayo-Wells added to Sofio's comment that near misses have psychological effects for both riders and motorists, and can convince people not to ride even if there is no physical injury.

Amstutz observed that any information is helpful and provides context, e.g., pointing out that MUTCD has conflicting guidance. Visuals (e.g., of bike box crowding) are impactful. Appealing to safety is good. Amstutz agreed that signal timing changes may be challenging to pursue, even changing signal heads requires labor/logistics. Amstutz recommended sending a concise document to DPW Director Rademacher that clearly describes issues with visual support.

Tonkin suggested that Sofio coordinate collection of assets and present at next ABAC meeting.

Amstutz said what has already been presented was a good start, but may need explanation to provide context.

Sofio said that he could also document specific near-miss incidents, and will coordinate with Brian Ristuccia as well.

Tonkin asked when Sofio had observed the most bike box congestion; Sofio said weekend early afternoons are particularly bad.

## 6. Update on the Design Review Committee for Mass Ave/Appleton

Tonkin summarized the first meeting of the Design Review Committee. The intent was to get consensus within the meeting, but this proved difficult. There were divergent opinions, hard to get an overarching view of what people wanted. There was agreement on some items, but no overall consensus. Scope of redesign was unclear, debate about whether there should be a left turn lane on Mass Ave westbound. Meeting concluded with a request for Green International to produce a third iteration of the concept drawing if funding permits, reflecting comments in the meeting and suggestions from Phil Goff (East Arlington Livable Streets), Sofio, and others, and the committee could vote to approve this proposal at the next meeting.

Tonkin noted that slowing the traffic would be good, vehicles move through the intersection rapidly both east- and west-bound. Narrowing lanes does slow traffic (affects perception). Bike lanes or bump-outs would help.

Sofio clarifies that the request from Green for another iteration would include bike lanes.

Tonkin noted that support for bike lanes in the meeting was broad, not just from bike advocates, partly because bike lanes effectively narrow the road. There was also concern about the visibility reduction due to parked cars.

Epstein: Agrees, narrow lanes and bike lanes should be prioritized. Also discussion about dedicated left turn lane; some controversy but may reduce left turns at the intersection (since cars would have to wait longer to turn). Biggest controversy was about one-way direction for Appleton Pl, and how to address other bad sightlines, e.g., Burton St. Also confusion about short-term vs. long-term focus. With more cyclists on the road as weather gets better, need to address some of these issues now, even if only a temporary solution.

Tonkin: Representative for St Athanasius the Great church was vocal, lots of concerns, including preserving accessibility for people with impaired mobility, influences directionality of Appleton Pl. Also concerns about sub-standard sidewalks, but these need to be longer term fixes.

Amstutz: Agree there was lots of debate, less consensus than hoped for. Conversation got away from committee's central focus: safety of all users, especially pedestrians who are least-well served by the current design. Need to reschedule meeting for next week because of conflict; hoping to refocus on safety when evaluating trade-offs, some proposals from Green International have been too focused on automobile traffic, not enough on safety.

Tonkin: Pedestrian safety was not emphasized enough, intersection is awful for pedestrians to cross. Pedestrian improvements will also benefit cycle community.

## 7. Lake Street crossing video update

Tonkin: Contacted ACMI (Arlington Community Media, Inc), they are still interested in supporting this, and have more time now that elections are over. Muris, Doug M, still interested? Petru, interested? Building this relationship could be valuable.

Kobaslija: Yes

Mayo-Wells: Yes

Sofio: Yes

Thompson: Need to get the signal working correctly before taking video of operation. Sofio raised this issue, there are louvers installed to keep the signal from being seen from Brooks Avenue, but now hard for lead car to see as well. Town Engineer Chouinard advised the louvers will be removed shortly. Observed that light is cycling more quickly which should help path user compliance. DPW is aware of issues, wait a few weeks for adjustments to be finalized before video.

Sofio: When are bike stencils going to be applied? Wait-for-green has not been hooked up with detection yet. On the positive side, timing seems to have been adjusted to be more favorable to pedestrian bike traffic: always cycles, and more responsive to request.

Smith: Re: line painting. Was put off until spring cycle last fall, but now it's Spring, a reminder from the committee would be helpful. (Also to get bike shared lane stencils in front of Town Hall repainted in correct location, out of door zone.)

Sofio: Possible to use more green-backed sharrows? Have seen studies that they perform better, Cambridge has adopted them.

Tonkin: Re paint requirements: center line on rail trail needs to be repainted also.

Amstutz: Need to contact Asst. Town Engineer Copithorne on another Lake Street matter, but multiple contacts will not hurt. Re: wait-for-green box, there has been some discussion about adding at Swan Place. Not sure of status.

Sofio: 90 second wait if you miss that one, so that would be great.

## 8. Bike counts

Tonkin: MPO (Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization) is looking for volunteers to count: [https://www.ctps.org/bike\\_ped\\_count\\_1](https://www.ctps.org/bike_ped_count_1)

Should ABAC do a spring count? Last year's was in front of Town Hall. What location would provide the most useful data?

Mayo-Wells: Rod Holland isn't present, but has previously advocated for collecting data on the Minuteman trail at some point west of Town Hall. We've looked at eastern leg of Minuteman, but might see different use patterns/mode splits.

Tonkin: Yes, we do have the automated counter near Swan Place, and EALS (East Arlington Livable Streets) does counts near Alewife, so that data is available. Do we want to do a count? Where/when, who is interested? Have usually done from 7am/7pm on one week- and one weekend day.

Sofio: Interested.

Amstutz: Yes, we try for 12 hours each day, (12 volunteers, although some may do 2 hours) Some easy and/or interesting locations: By Trader Joe's, by Ed Burns Arena. Have seen students in the morning coming down Ryder St toward Forest St (to get to Ottoson School), would be interesting to document that. Also Mill Street near the High School, there is space off of the path to stand or even sit (benches).

Epstein: Locations on Mass Ave or on trail? Also available to volunteer.

Amstutz: For count purposes, was thinking on the Bikeway. We do have recent count data at Forest/Mass Ave.

Tonkin: Also parking lot, bench at Trader Joe's. Traffic might be questionable, may not be much traffic from Arlington eastbound. Would potentially see High School traffic at Ed Burns Arena, also parking lot and bench there.

Mayo-Wells: Likes Daniel's suggestion of Ed Burns arena and getting data on student traffic.

Sofio: Yes, Ed Burns Arena location sounds interesting. Could also be interesting to observe interaction with bike traffic and operations at D. Muzzioli Associates.

Kobaslija: I like those locations, but since we can't do all, we should figure out what questions we want to answer, student population commuting is interesting, want to enable more students to get to school on bikes.

Tonkin: Not sure what behaviors we may see, e.g. at Swan Place we see joggers turn around go back to Alewife, don't know if we will see similar patterns elsewhere, more commuters, walkers.

Kobaslija: Could possibly do multiple simultaneous locations (for less than 12 hours) to compare directly where traffic stops, proceeds through? But maybe for future, not this time.

Tonkin: 12 hour format originally came from MPO.

Epstein: Like Ryder St, would also see traffic from the east up to Trader Joe's, although not Lexington traffic to Trader Joe's. Would be interesting to see weekend traffic, data for school. Is Ottoson back to 5-days/week operation? Sometime between May, mid-June would be good.

Miller: Yes, as of next week



Sofio: One issue with looking at school traffic at Minuteman/Ryder, Abbi Holt (Appleton Design Review Committee, Ottoson Middle School) mentioned that a lot of students get off the Minuteman at Brattle St (via Washington St).

Amstutz: Muris had a good question, what are we trying to collect? Collecting the same information allows longitudinal comparison. Other locations wouldn't have same history but would provide indication of if use patterns might be substantially different. The automated counter gives daily usage information, variance over full year (despite problems). Manual counts enable data that a counter can't provide, e.g., gender, children riding, children in carriers.

Sofio: Could look at Mass Ave/Mystic/Pleasant, usage of bike box and lanes vs. sidewalks, vehicle lanes.

Amstutz: There have been complaints from business owners about biking on sidewalks, data would be useful. People do bike the wrong way in the bike lane on the north side.

Sofio: There is signage for westbound cyclists re: riding on sidewalk, but hard to see (easier when walking than biking). Wrong way signs for the bike lane were recommended but not installed. (Diagram of intersection might help to clarify intended use.)

Tonkin: There was a diagram prior to the intersection redesign. Do we have consensus on where to do counts? Ryder St?

Amstutz: There's no particular need for information by Ryder St, other than as a possible data point for Bikeway Planning project. Mass Ave/Pleasant/Mystic could be more immediately useful for influencing changes to that intersection. (Not sure how prevalent wrong-way riding is, or how many riders are unclear on directions.)

Tonkin: Need to be specific about what we're measuring, and where.

Sofio: By the Kickstand Cafe? And adjust counter sheet to include wrong-way cycling?

Tonkin: Or in front of the Jefferson Cutter house, on the north side?

Amstutz: Or from northwest corner, so you can see bikes go into the bike box. Could focus just on peak times (from automated counter) rather than full 12 hour, especially if you need more than one observer.

Tonkin: Complicated, maybe one observer for the bike box, another to count eastbound traffic going the wrong way, or turning left from Mystic St. Peak times may be more diffuse on weekends, but weekdays likely have morning, evening rush.

Sofio: Can also identify bike box crowding, motor vehicles making the illegal right turn on red from Mystic. Also we may see confusion about where to stop for bike traffic light going eastbound on the Minutemen, there are the shark teeth on the pavement (right place for video detection?) but some people stop in front of the crosswalk.

Tonkin: Before or after next meeting on May 19? Are we ready to pick a date now?

Amstutz: Limited ability to help right now due to Mass Ave/Appleton and other commitments.

Tonkin: Will talk off-line with Scott and schedule something for late May/early June. Is there any particular time restraint?

Amstutz: If we're not doing a direct comparison to previous data, no. Just avoid times that might not be typical, e.g., Memorial Day, and before the end of school if school traffic is of interest. Will mention to Economic Development Coordinator Carter since this had come up before and the Chamber of Commerce may have some interest.

## 9. General updates from Planning Department

See

<https://www.arlingtonma.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/56010/637546298784489409>

Amstutz:

### a. Connect Arlington Sustainable Transportation Plan

Making final edits, changes to priorities, implementation table. Planning to brief Select Board members, bring final version to Board for endorsement, targeting May.

### b. Bluebikes

Redeployed on-street stations April 8th.

1,895 trips in 2020 (Sep-Dec) — ~474/month

668 trips so far in 2021

381 trips so far in April

Tonkin: Do we have data on whether riders from Cambridge are using Bluebikes on Minuteman?

Amstutz: Possible, have certainly seen Bluebikes on the Bikeway.

### c. Eco Counter on Blkeway

Battery replaced (March 31). MassDOT covered parts/labor.

Almost no counts recorded in March due to dead battery.

Mayo-Wells: What is expected battery life? We just had a new unit installed?

Amstutz: 2 years. The battery was not replaced when the other components were replaced because it was thought to be in good condition. (There is a battery life indicator in the data portal, but it is based on modeling rather than actual data, so, not very reliable.)

### d. Chestnut St at Chestnut Terrace

Public meeting March 30.

TAC presented ideas for improving safety including bump-outs, warning beacon, and longer term geometric changes to Mystic/Chestnut (responding to pedestrian fatality 2019/12/31)

Good discussion, agreement that removing the crosswalk (which had been proposed) was not a good solution. Plan to revisit with TAC in May to formalize the plan to present to the Select Board.

Tonkin: Also attended the meeting, saw confusion between short-term, long-term proposals. Would proposed geometry changes force truck traffic to re-route?

Amstutz: Truck traffic would be accommodated, issue is that geometry is overly generous to motor vehicle traffic of all kinds, and unfriendly/unsafe for pedestrians. Removing the slip lanes would require trucks to go more slowly or modify approach to turn.

Sofio: Would all-way walk be possible? Maybe not, because of signal timing complexity.

Amstutz: Believe that there is some connection between timing at Mass/Mystic/Pleasant and Mass/Chestnut, but not clear on details.

### e. Bike Parking Update

Met with Parks & Recreation Commission last week. Proposed bike parking locations, to get on Parks & Rec agenda: Buzzell Field, Magnolia Park, Hill's Hill, Ed Burns Arena. Need to follow up with Recreation Director Connelly to get clarity. Should be able to buy bike racks soon (have funding for them already).

At Hill's Hill there will be an accessible walkway constructed between bikeway and parking lot, contractor already selected, and maybe possible to install bike parking as part of that project.

**f. Bikeway Planning Project RFP**

\$80K funding from Community Preservation Act (CPA) for Bikeway Planning Project; drafting RFP for consultant.

RFP aims to be comprehensive, covering: maintenance (pavement, bridges, guardrails), safety (access/exit points, at-grade crossings), waysides/staying areas (placemaking, destinations on the bikeway, opportunities for art installations), policies and education, visioning.

Expect to release RFP early/mid May so contract can be awarded before end of fiscal year.

ABAC should be involved, not sure if there may be a dedicated advisory committee for this contract.

**g. Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) Update**

Scott Smith presented materials at TAC, opportunity to influence MUTCD to make guidance less car-centric.

Podcast including interview with America Walks executive director McGinn:

<https://usa.streetsblog.org/2021/04/15/talking-headways-podcast-call-it-the-manual-undermining-terrific-community-design-mutcd/>

One of the groups advocating for a rewrite:

<https://nacto.org/program/modernizing-federal-standards/>

Comments are due May 14.

**10. Tales from the Bikeway,  
encroachment & centerline markings**

Tonkin: We touched on centerline markings already.

Was contacted in connection with permission to use the Bikeway for a sponsored walk. Sent a policy document on this to the Town Manager's office some time ago, but it was never approved/formally adopted. Approval not likely given Covid, but we may need to revisit the policy document going forward.

Amstutz: 2 things

On encroachment, regarding D. Muzzioli Associates, contacted Environmental Planner Emily Sullivan, may do a field walk to examine more closely. They are aware of concerns, not sure what actions have been taken.

Concern about artwork installed on bridge at Park St, nothing new to report on that.

11.

## Other business

Johnson: Met former ABAC member Elizabeth Shea, with her daughter, now in 1st grade. Says hello to all, misses the committee, still reading emails, but very busy. Headline for Elizabeth was that we now have Daniel bringing good work and stability to the Committee.

Sofio: Mill St video detection not working well for eastbound traffic.

Tonkin: Issue for DPW.

Adjourned